

## **Design Review Board**

### **Procedural Rules and Application Instructions**

Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Design Review Board (DRB) for an informal discussion if they have questions of compliance or questions about the design of their proposed sign or building construction. Since the closing of all Town offices due to Covid-19 the Design Review Board is holding their meetings via Zoom. In addition, the process for applying to the DRB has changed significantly with deadlines for submissions.

The Board generally meets on the first and third Mondays of each month, but at least once a month. A schedule is posted online at <http://needhamma.gov/drb> Applicants must call the Planning and Community Development Office at 781-455-7550 extension 222 to have their name and other pertinent information added to the meeting agenda. It is strongly recommended that applicants call two weeks in advance of a meeting.

There are four types of application and procedures for DRB approval, depending on the type of proposed project and location of the proposed project. They are:

- (1) Sign Applications, Awning Applications and Façade Renovations in all districts except Center Business Zoning District;
- (2) Projects under review by the Planning Board, such as site plan review, or a Major or Minor project;
- (3) Appeals to the Sign-By-Law and Design Review Board Special Permits; and
- (4) Needham Center Building Façade review.

Instructions for each of the above processes follow.

In order for applications to be considered complete please submit items by email in pdf form to Elisa Litchman at [elitchman@needhamma.gov](mailto:elitchman@needhamma.gov) at least one week prior to a scheduled meeting. See instructions for application requirements below.

### **Fee Schedule:**

Please make checks payable to the “Town of Needham”. Applicants should mail the DRB Fees to:

Elisa Litchman  
DRB/Planning Department  
Town of Needham  
500 Dedham Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492

ATTENTION: DRB Fees

Design Review Board review of projects undergoing submission to the Planning Board	No Fee
Signs	\$25 <b>each</b> sign
Awnings only (no other façade changes)	\$25 (any signage on the awning is additional \$25 per sign)
Façade renovations	\$25
Needham Center Façade renovations	\$100 plus newspaper posting fee
Sign – By – Law Appeals and Special Permits	\$25 plus \$2 per square foot plus newspaper posting fee

### **Helpful Information Regarding Signage:**

The purpose of building signage is to identify a particular business in its location. It is not for the purpose of advertising aspects of the business, nor for the listing of website information or phone numbers. Installing that type of information on the building sign is discouraged. We recognize that sometimes a generic business name may require some additional description but it should be brief and clear and graphically secondary on the sign. The Board discourages use of white backgrounds in panel signs, especially on darker façade materials such as brick or on internally illuminated signs. Applicants sometimes want to install the logo that appears on their stationary or business card. Logos are designed for a different purpose and do not always translate well to a building sign. The Board urges caution to those considering this approach. Franchise businesses may have recommendations or requirements for signage that do not meet with the Sign By-Law or Board review standards. The Board may recommend modifications to the Franchise standard signage. The applicant should inform the Board if any additional approvals from the franchising business would be required and the Board will try to work with the applicant on possible interim solutions.

### **Instructions for Sign Applications and for Awning Applications and Façade Renovations in All Districts (Except Center Business Zoning District)**

Applications for signage, for awnings, or façade renovations must be on the Design Review Board agenda by the Monday of the week prior to the meeting. Applicants should call the Planning and Community Development Office at 781-455-7550 extension 222 to coordinate participation in a DRB meeting, be placed on the agenda, and to submit all materials in advance.

Please submit electronic (pdf) versions of all applications and proposals by email to Elisa Litchman ([elitchman@needhamma.gov](mailto:elitchman@needhamma.gov)) in the Planning Department: Please include:

1. Completed Design Review Board Application
2. Sign plan, section, and elevation. Scaled drawings of proposed sign, including:
  - a. All dimensions clearly labeled.
  - b. Photo example of all colors that will be used.
  - c. Photo example of materials, style, description, and any other pertinent information.
  - d. Mounting detail shown in cross-section.
  - e. Lighting detail with light source (if non-illuminated, provide note on drawings).
3. Façade plan: Scaled drawing of façade elevation with proposed sign, awning location indicated, or façade renovation including:
  - a. Height and frontage measurements
  - b. Sign band with dimensions. Any other pertinent information.
  - c. Location of sign or awning on façade, with dimensions
  - d. Entrances, windows, architectural details, lights, etc.
  - e. Buildings with multiple tenants require drawing(s) or photo(s) of all store/business fronts including the applicants.
  - f. Also include recent photograph(s) of the façade with approximate size of sign indicated.
  - g. Also include recent photograph(s) of neighboring façades (on either side of faced with proposed sign) to show relationship to other existing signs, awnings, and facades.
4. Site plan: for ground-mounted signs, locate lot lines, buildings, signs, parking, driveways, etc.
5. Please send by USPS the Design Review Board fees in the form of a check for \$25 for each sign or awning application, payable to the “Town of Needham”- see instructions for payment above.

## **Instructions for Projects Under Review by the Planning Board**

Applicants should submit the completed DRB Application Form to the Planning Board with their initial application for site plan review. Applications for projects undergoing site plan review, or major or minor project review before the Planning Board, must be on the DRB agenda the Monday of the week prior to the DRB meeting. Applicants must call the Planning and Community Development Office at 781-455-7550 extension 222 to coordinate participation in a DRB meeting, to be placed on the agenda, and to submit all materials two weeks in advance. Please submit all information listed below unless otherwise required by the Zoning By-Law.

- Please submit three (3) completed hard copy large format sets of documents by mail to:  
Mr. Mark Gluesing,  
Chairman, Design Review Board  
48 Mackintosh Avenue  
Needham, MA 02492
- Please submit electronic (pdf) versions of all applications and proposals, 8.5" x 11" or 11" x 17" if larger, by email to Elisa Litchman ([elitchman@needhamma.gov](mailto:elitchman@needhamma.gov)) in the Planning Department at least one week prior to scheduled DRB meeting. Please include the following:
  1. Completed Design Review Board Application
  2. Scaled drawings showing
    - a. Site Plans and landscape plans
    - b. Building Plans, Elevations, and Sections with indications of materials used
    - c. Photos of material samples of major building elements
    - d. Details of major architectural elements
  3. One set of presentation photographs of existing building or site including surrounding areas.

Application materials listed in the Zoning By-Laws; Section 4.2.5 Planned Residential Development; 4.2.6 Residential Compound; 7.2 Building or Use Permits; or 7.4 Site Plan Review, if applicable.

## **Instructions for Appeals to the Sign-By-Law and for Design Review Board Special Permits**

Appeals to the Sign-By-Law and for Design Review Board Special Permits require a hearing before the Design Review Board. Applicants for Appeals to the Sign-By-Law and for Design Review Board Special Permits shall discuss the proposal with the Building Department, who will then assist the Applicant in posting a legal notice in the newspaper to advertise for the hearing. Application forms and proposed plans must be submitted by email to Elisa Litchman ([elitchman@needhamma.gov](mailto:elitchman@needhamma.gov)) in the Planning Department. The applicant's complete DRB application will be posted online to allow for review by interested parties.

## **Instructions for Façade Renovation Applications in the Center Business Zoning District**

Applications for sign, awning, and façade renovations in the Center Business Zoning District have their own specific requirements and procedures. Please see the specifics below.

Application forms and proposed plans must be submitted by email to Elisa Litchman ([elitchman@needhamma.gov](mailto:elitchman@needhamma.gov)) in the Planning Department.

1. Email completed application materials to Elisa Litchman ([elitchman@needhamma.gov](mailto:elitchman@needhamma.gov)) in the Planning and Community Development Office **not less than 30 days** before the DRB meeting date. Upon delivery the applicant will receive by email a public notice to be posted immediately in the project location's front window or wall.
2. The Town will arrange for Notice of the Meeting to be posted in the local newspaper at the applicant's expense and send the Notice to the Town Clerk for posting.
3. The applicant will attend the Zoom DRB scheduled meeting. The project will either be Approved, Approved with Conditions, Disapproved, or continued for further study.
4. If approved with conditions, the drawings will be revised by the applicant and sent by email to Elisa Litchman (at the Planning Department Office) for final stamped approval and then the applicant will submit as part of the Building Permit application. The applicant does not need to attend an additional meeting unless specifically requested to do so by the DRB.
5. The DRB will be notified by the Building Department when there is a request for final inspection of the project. The DRB will review the work done and notify the Building Inspector that the work complies or does not comply with the approved DRB submission.

Please refer to the section above on pages 2-3 for Signs, Awnings and Façade Renovations to complete the DRB process for Façade Renovation in the Center Business Zoning District.